Supreme Court, U.S.
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No. 98-1996

In the Supreme Court of the United States

JOSEPH CHARLES PELCHAT, PETITIONER

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

BRIEF FOR THE UNITED STATES

SETH P. WAXMAN
Solicitor General
Counsel of Record
JAMES K. ROBINSON
Assistant Attorney General
RICHARD A. FRIEDMAN
Attorney
Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001
(202) 514-2217

QUESTION PRESENTED

Whether 18 U.S.C. 3583(e) (1988), which governed supervised release at the time of petitioner's offense (but has since been amended), authorized the district court, upon revoking petitioner's supervised release, to order petitioner to serve a renewed term of supervised release following a term of reimprisonment.

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OPINION BELOW

The opinion of the court of appeals (Pet. App. A1-A3) is unpublished, but the decision is noted at 175 F.3d 1025 (Table).

JURISDICTION

The judgment of the court of appeals was entered on March 12, 1999. The petition for a writ of certiorari was filed on June 10, 1999. The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. 1254(1).

STATEMENT

After his supervised release was revoked by the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota, petitioner was ordered to serve 14 months' reimprisonment, to be followed by 22 months' renewed

supervised release. The court of appeals affirmed. Pet. App. A1-A2.

1. On May 14, 1990, after a guilty plea, petitioner was convicted of possessing marijuana with the intent to distribute it, in violation of 21 U.S.C. 841(a)(1), which was a Class C felony.[1] Gov't C.A. Br. 1. Petitioner was sentenced to 84 months' imprisonment, to be followed by four years' supervised release. *Ibid.* On October 9, 1998, while petitioner was serving his term of supervised release, the district court determined that he had violated his release conditions, revoked his release, and sentenced him to 14 months' reimprisonment, to be followed by a 22-month term of renewed supervised release. *Id.* at 2; Pet. App. A2.

2. At the time of petitioner's original offense, violations of supervised release were governed by 18 U.S.C. 3583(e) (1988). That provision authorized the district courts, upon an offender's violation of his supervised release, to "revoke a term of supervised release, and require the person to serve in prison all or part of the term of supervised release without credit for time previously served on postrelease supervision." 18 U.S.C. 3583(e)(3) (1988). For a Class C felony, such as petitioner's offense, the reimprisonment component of the post-revocation sentence was limited to two years. 18 U.S.C. 3583(e)(3) (1988). The courts of

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[1] Petitioner pleaded guilty to possessing with the intent to distribute 1.259 kilograms of marijuana, an amount that invokes the sentencing provisions of 21 U.S.C. 841(b)(1)(D). See Plea Agmt. ¶ 1 (May 14, 1990). Because petitioner committed his offense after a previous conviction for a drug offense (*id.* ¶ 8), his offense was punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment, to be followed by a minimum of four years' supervised release. See 21 U.S.C. 841(b)(1)(D). Petitioner's offense was therefore a Class C felony under 18 U.S.C. 3559(a)(3).

appeals reached conflicting views on whether that provision authorized a district court to order an offender who violated supervised release to serve a combined term of reimprisonment and renewed supervised release, or whether the court was limited to electing between a term of reimprisonment or a term of renewed supervised release.[2] The Eighth Circuit, in which petitioner was sentenced, held that a district court was authorized to combine a term of reimprisonment with a renewed term of supervised release. See *United States* v. *Schrader*, 973 F.2d 623, 625 (8th Cir. 1992).

Effective September 13, 1994—after petitioner committed the underlying offense for which he was imprisoned, but before he violated the terms of his supervised release—Congress enacted 18 U.S.C. 3583(h). Pub. L. No. 103-322, Tit. XI, § 110505(3), 108 Stat. 2017. Section 3583(h) made clear that, when a defendant's term of supervised release is revoked and

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[2] The First and Eighth Circuits had ruled that sentencing courts had the power to order offenders to serve terms of reimprisonment to be followed by renewed supervised release, but other circuits disagreed and found no authority to order offenders to serve a renewed term of supervised release if they were sentenced to reimprisonment. Compare *United States* v. *O'Neil*, 11 F.3d 292, 293 (1st Cir. 1993), and *United States* v. *Schrader*, 973 F.2d 623, 625 (8th Cir. 1992), with *United States* v. *Koehler*, 973 F.2d 132, 134-136 (2d Cir. 1992); *United States* v. *Malesic*, 18 F.3d 205, 206 (3d Cir. 1994); *United States* v. *Cooper*, 962 F.2d 339, 341-342 (4th Cir. 1992); *United States* v. *Holmes*, 954 F.2d 270, 272-273 (5th Cir. 1992); *United States* v. *Truss*, 4 F.3d 437, 441 (6th Cir. 1993); *United States* v. *McGee*, 981 F.2d 271, 274-276 (7th Cir. 1992); *United States* v. *Behnezhad*, 907 F.2d 896, 898-899 (9th Cir. 1990); *United States* v. *Rockwell*, 984 F.2d 1112, 1116-1117 (10th Cir.), cert. denied, 508 U.S. 966 (1993); and *United States* v. *Tatum*, 998 F.2d 893, 895-896 (11th Cir. 1993).

he is ordered to serve a term of reimprisonment, the district court may also order the offender to serve a term of supervised release after his release from reimprisonment. Section 3583(h) expressly authorizes a new term of supervised release, as long as the term of reimprisonment is less than the maximum authorized upon revocation, and as long as the combination of the period of reimprisonment and the period of supervised release does not exceed in duration the maximum term of supervised release authorized for the original offense. 18 U.S.C. 3583(h). For these purposes, the offender is not entitled to any credit for the time he spent on supervised release before it was revoked. See 18 U.S.C. 3583(e)(3) and (h).[3]

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[3] Section 3583(h) provides in full:

> When a term of supervised release is revoked and the defendant is required to serve a term of imprisonment that is less than the maximum term of imprisonment authorized under subsection (e)(3), the court may include a requirement that the defendant be placed on a term of supervised release after imprisonment. The length of such a term of supervised release shall not exceed the term of supervised release authorized by statute for the offense that resulted in the original term of supervised release, less any term of imprisonment that was imposed upon revocation of supervised release.

Section 3583(e)(3) provides that, upon finding a violation of a condition of supervised release, a district court may

> revoke a term of supervised release, and require the defendant to serve in prison all or part of the term of supervised release * * * without credit for time previously served on postrelease supervision, * * * except that a defendant whose term is revoked under this paragraph may not be required to serve more than 5 years in prison if the offense that resulted in the term of supervised release is a class A felony, more than 3 years in prison if such offense is a class B

3. Petitioner appealed the revocation of his supervised release. He argued on appeal that the court should overrule its decision in *Schrader*, *supra*, and should hold that 18 U.S.C. 3583, as in effect before Congress enacted Section 3583(h) in 1994, did not authorize the district court, upon revoking supervised release, to impose both a term of reimprisonment and a new term of supervised release. The court rejected petitioner's argument to overrule *Schrader*, noting that it has "repeatedly declined to reconsider *Schrader* en banc." Pet. App. A2. The court also rejected petitioner's argument (which depended on the overruling of *Schrader*) that application of new Section 3583(h) to authorize his renewed term of supervised release would violate the Ex Post Facto Clause, U.S. Const. Art. I, § 9, Cl. 3. Pet. App. A2. The court noted that it had "previously considered and rejected such arguments" (*ibid.*) in *United States* v. *St. John*, 92 F.3d 761 (8th Cir. 1996), which held that "the new law and [the Circuit's] interpretation of the prior law have the same effect," *id.* at 766.

DISCUSSION

Petitioner urges (Pet. 3-5) this Court to decide whether the Eighth Circuit has correctly interpreted 18 U.S.C. 3583(e) (1988), as it was in effect at the time he committed his underlying drug offense, to authorize the district court, upon revoking his initial supervised release, to impose both a term of reimprisonment and a renewed term of supervised release. Under the Eighth Circuit's construction of Section 3583(e)(3) as in effect at the time of petitioner's underlying offense, "the dis-

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felony, more than 2 years in prison if such offense is a class C or D felony, or more than one year in any other case.

trict court could impose, in addition to the term of imprisonment (as limited by the statute), a new term of supervised release, so long as the aggregate of the two terms is less than or equal to the original term of supervised release." *United States* v. *St. John*, 92 F.3d 761, 765 (1996); see *United States* v. *Schrader*, 973 F.2d 623, 625 (8th Cir. 1992). The circuits divided on that question, see note 2, *supra*, and in 1994 Congress enacted 18 U.S.C. 3583(h), which now makes clear that district courts do have the authority to impose a new term of supervised release, as well as a term of reimprisonment, upon revoking an offender's supervised release.

Although the question whether the district courts had authority under Section 3583(e)(3) to impose a renewed term of supervised release before Congress enacted Section 3583(h) is therefore of no general prospective importance, nonetheless this case should be held for the Court's decision in *Johnson* v. *United States*, cert. granted, No. 99-5153 (Oct. 18, 1999). In *Johnson*, the Court granted certiorari to determine whether the Ex Post Facto Clause prevents a district court from exercising its authority under Section 3583(h) to impose a renewed term of supervised release as well as a term of reimprisonment on an offender who committed his underlying offense before Section 3583(h) was enacted, in a circuit that had previously concluded that Section 3583(e)(3) did not authorize the district courts to impose both reimprisonment and renewed supervised release as a sanction for a violation of the conditions of supervised release.

In *Johnson*, the Court may have occasion, in comparing the law before Section 3583(h) was enacted with the law after its enactment, to determine whether district courts had authority to impose a renewed term of

supervised release before enactment of Section 3583(h). That determination may, in turn, affect the court of appeals' conclusion in this case that petitioner's renewed term of supervised release would have been valid under the old law. Accordingly, the petition in this case should be held pending the Court's decision in *Johnson*.

CONCLUSION

The petition for a writ of certiorari should be held pending the decision of the Court in *Johnson* v. *United States*, cert. granted, No. 99-5153 (Oct. 18, 1999), and then disposed of as appropriate in light of the decision in that case.

Respectfully submitted.

SETH P. WAXMAN
Solicitor General
JAMES K. ROBINSON
Assistant Attorney General
RICHARD A. FRIEDMAN
Attorney

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